NETTA BECKER AND THE TIMELINE CRIME

JENNIFER CLAESSEN

For my mum, Joanna, and Nanny Paddy
and Grandad Colin

Netta Becker and the Timeline Crime is a uclanpublishing book

First published in Great Britain in 2025 by
uclanpublishing
University of Central Lancashire
Preston, PR1 2HE, UK

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978-1-916747-59-3

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

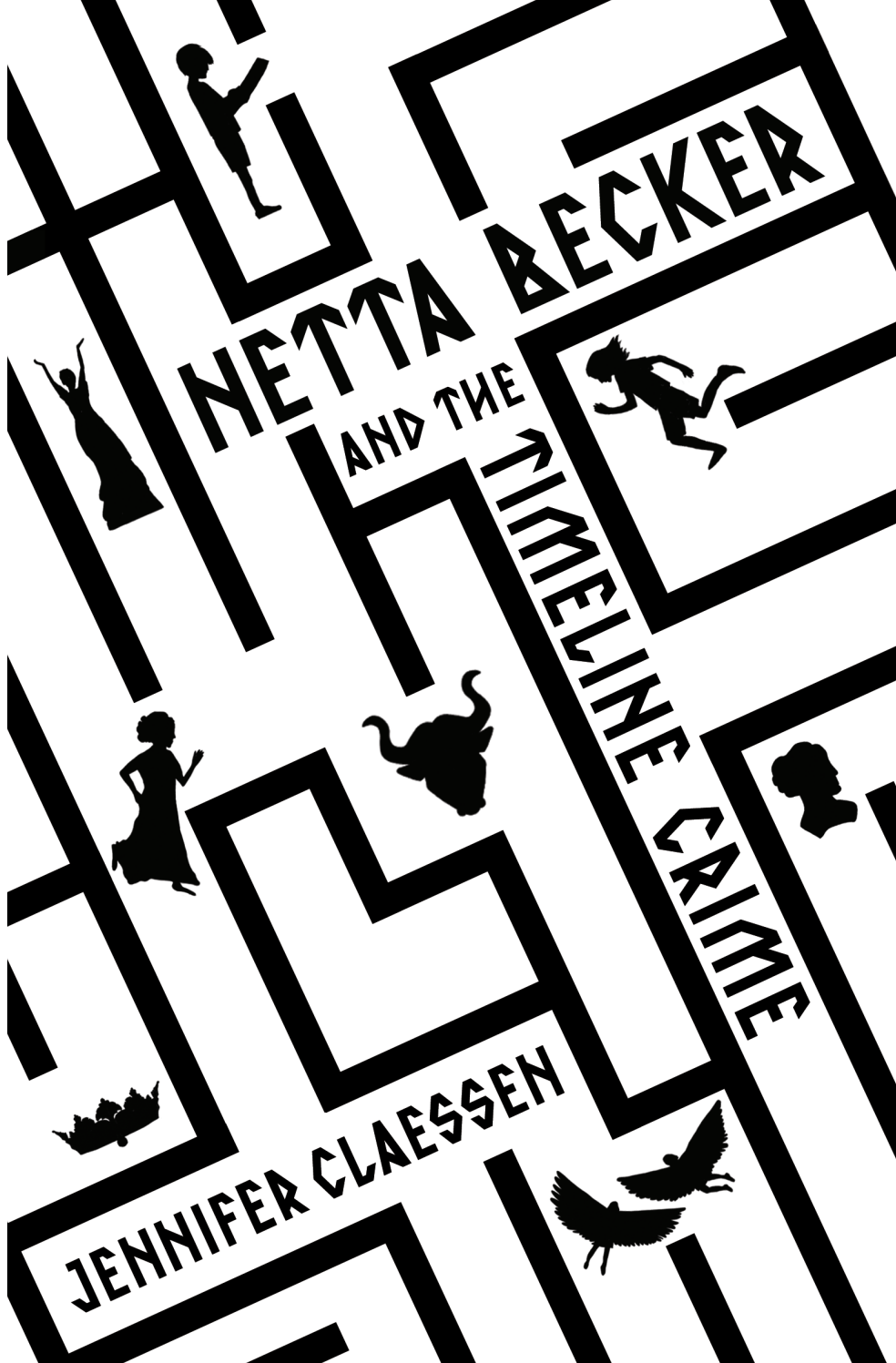
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Set in 11.5/17.5pt Kingfisher by Amy Cooper.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.



REVIEWS FROM READERS IN YEAR 5 AND 6

Very gripping and suspenseful! – *Mina*

I really loved this book because it was so much more
different to the books I normally read. I also found it
very funny and amusing. I found out lots of stuff! – *Amelia*

Really gripping – *Tanishqa*

I loved it! It was very exciting! – *Zuleyha*

Great story and words used, I really recommend it
to people who like reading and people who
don't know what book to read – *Sonia*

A thrilling book! I love adventure stories – *Heer*

The book was amazing! It hooked me in from the start to the
end and took me to another world of incredible adventures.
I loved it! – *Rosa*

I couldn't put it down once I picked it up!
Lovely book. – *Amara*

Super interesting and I could feel
how the characters were feeling – *Zoe*

I love Netta, it's amazing and very funny – *Jumana*

Soo good! The book is brilliant – *Zifei*

I loved reading Netta Becker . . .
full of mystery and suspense – *Grace*

I liked and thought the book was very humorous – *Leila*

Whisks you off to a world of wonder! – *Annie*

An amazing adventure full of twists and turns – *Chloe*

Lots of humour! – *Shriya*

An amazing book I definitely recommend it to everyone.
The only problem is that once you start reading it,
you can't put it down – *Sze Ching*

Exciting and thrilling, I loved following
on with this adventure – *Aheli*

I'm very fussy about what books I enjoy. This one is amazing.
I can relate very easily to Netta and her feelings.
It was non-stop niggling at the back of
my mind telling me to read it – *Pia*

Absolutely amazing and incredibly action-packed!
I love the plot, it was so exciting to read – *Amelia*

With huge thanks to the Library Champions, librarian
Dr Mukesh and all children and staff at The Abbey School Junior
in Reading where Jennifer loves being 'Patron of Reading'.



CHAPTER 1



Netta stepped out of the airport and the heat hit her first. The next thing that hit her was the giant statue.

She was fumbling for her sunglasses which she suddenly really needed (the sun so yellow, the sky so blue). It was all way too blinding.

And that was how she smacked into the side of the huge metal thing.

"Sorry," she said reflexively, before backing away and rubbing her arm. "Oh . . . it's a . . . cow."

Her brother glanced up from his book. "Bull," Remy corrected.

"Oh. Cool," Netta said, finally finding her sunglasses to save her squint.

"Bulls are the emblems of Crete," Remy said, reciting from memory, not reading from the massive gold hardback in his hands. But then he did open it and jabbed his finger at a picture. "And this is how Crete got its kings."

"Oh. Not cool," Netta said, her nose crinkling at the picture of a bull swimming out to sea. A woman was on its back, clinging on, looking like she was screaming.

"Welcome to Crete!" an extremely old man called

across the car park. He was holding a white sign that read 'ARCHON VILLA'. He dropped Netta a wink.

Netta did not appreciate the wink.

"Is that the guidebook?" she asked, her attention returning to Remy, already knowing it was way too big and way too gold for that.

Remy flipped the cover so she could see the shiny embossed swirls announcing the book as *Greek Myths and Legends*.

"Zeus stole that woman," he added.

"This is why *I'm* not into *you* being into the Greek myth stuff," Netta said. "It's all gross."

Remy shut the book and fished for his own sunglasses. "Some of it is a bit gross," he admitted. He brought out a pair of book-crunched sunglasses, one of the arms swinging loose.

Remy was unoffendable. He'd been single-minded since 3 a.m.: this island was his own personal gala, his dream, his goal. Netta would feel better for a fight, but Remy wasn't interested in arguing right now.

They had done a whole bus-train-shuttle-plane thing to get here, which started in the middle of the night. There was no overland route to the island. The maps app on Netta's phone seemed surprised about this.

"This way!" Dad said, marching ahead. "Come on, kids! Dig out those holiday smiles."

But all Netta could find in herself was a crispy dry "Sure".

She was stiff with a sulk, bringing up the rear. Remy (guidebook), Mum (pointing at signs), Dad (checking the booking on his phone) were a tight trio powering ahead, in a rush to get to the long-promised fun and relaxation.

Netta brought her wheely suitcase to heel like a naughty dog and chased her family.

"Mum," Netta said, taking the fight to someone else, "that book is not appropriate for Remy. He's only nine. He shouldn't be reading that kind of thing."

Mum lowered her sunglasses to peer at the book. "His teacher recommended that one," she said.

"He said he'd be here," Dad muttered to himself, craning his neck to peer over other sunglassed tourists. No one else had bumped into the bull yet though, Netta observed regretfully.

"What was it called again?" Mum asked.

Dad scrolled. "Oh, um – yes . . ."

"Archon Villa," Remy said.

"Archon?" Netta checked.

"Archon!" another voice echoed.

It was the old winking man with the sign, which they'd missioned straight past.

"Welcome, welcome to my island!" The man gave them all a beaming smile as, with a sweep of his arm,

he introduced them to a grey-ish white van. It was missing a bumper and had an impressive jagged crack across the front windscreen.

"Oh, hello! We're the Beckers," Mum said, as if they didn't have their own individual names. Netta knew her mum didn't do it on purpose, but she had a 'people voice', which was nothing like her normal voice.

"A whole bunch of Beckers," Dad said and, luckily for all of them, the old man laughed as if this was really funny.

"Yes! Beckers, hello!"

"Are you Oz?" Remy asked.

Three other families were standing by Oz's van. They didn't seem to mind Mum's 'people voice', and swapped surname-based introductions too. The Lane-Ho family, a happy mum with two little girls, shucking off coats and jumpers to embrace the heat. The Georgious, who told everyone they were over from mainland Greece – or at least tried to, as their three toddlers attempted to scale the roof of the van. And finally, father-and-son Brars.

A quick scan of the other kids told Netta that the oldest non-Becker child here could only be about five. Suddenly, she felt ancient. Not 'Ancient-Greece' ancient, but 'no-new-holiday-friends' ancient.

Eleven was just too old to be on a holiday designed by your younger brother.

"I can't believe you chose apartments with toddlers," Netta hissed at Remy as they squished together in the back of Oz's van. The van creaked into movement but no air-conditioning followed. Netta wondered if she could ask for a page from Remy's big book to make into a paper fan.

"Scorcher, isn't it?" Dad said to Mr Brar.

"Every day, Becker!" Oz shouted.

The Georgiou baby started to cry as the van cornered sharply. When it became apparent they had survived the hairpin bend, the Brars applauded. No one here had any chill.

Remy shrugged. "It's the closest apartment to the palace," he said.

"What palace?" Netta said, but she didn't listen for an answer. Instead, she pulled out her phone. She opened up her 'SQUAD' group first. No new messages. That wasn't right – hundreds of messages popped back and forth between the team daily, and even more in the run-up to a big swimming gala.

Big day nerves? Miss you Pheebs x

Phoebe would give her the updates about what she was missing in their private chat at least.

But the message just sat there, the tick that showed it has been delivered and read unchecked, no matter how many times Netta picked up her phone and put it back down again.

It was still only the morning, but she was so tired . . .

"Home sweet home!"

Netta's forehead bounced off the window and back into the headrest, jolting her out of a short snap of a nap.

She was in a car. She was in a car in Crete. She was in a car in Crete driven by an old man called Oz.

Oz turned around to beam at the Beckers as the rumble-clunk movement got even more clunky and they left the tarmac of the main road.

She was in a car in Crete driven by an old man called Oz who shouldn't be allowed to drive.

Netta stared at the window, seeing first the slightly greasy round circle her forehead had left.

Her phone had fallen out of her hand. She picked it up from the hot rough floor of the van and once again saw the undelivered message to Phoebe.

"Snoozing and drooling back there?" Dad called, and Netta wiped her chin. She cuffed the sticky mark from the window and then stared through it.

This was not 'home sweet home'.

Their destination, Archon Villa, was a low, flat, white-walled building with a terracotta tiled roof. The effect of looking at it against the sky was of blue, orange and white stripes.

"Lovely," Mum sighed contentedly, as she hopped out of one of the front seats.

Netta and Remy had to wait for six other people to disembark before they could take in the loveliness themselves.

And it might have been lovely. But the first thing Netta noticed was the goat.

Oz hissed at it, flapping a handkerchief to chivvy it out of the way, and pushed open the double wooden doors for his guests to file in behind him.

Remy had his camera up, videoing everything. He dragged his feet so much that Dad doubled back to wave him on.

"Come on!" Dad called. "Come into the shade!" It was his twenty-fifth 'come on' of the day, but his first for Remy.

Dodging past the goat craning to sniff out whatever they had in their pockets, Netta couldn't wait to get into the cool shade of the villa's hallway. And through that hallway, she spotted the only saving grace of this holiday: a swimming pool. She picked up the pace, already imagining the cool cut of her arms through water.

Inside, her eyes polka-dotted in the gloom and she had to hold on to the doorframe for a moment. Hot and bright suddenly turning to cool and dark was almost as bad as walking into that big metal cow again.

Her arms prickled with hairs rising, the sudden temperature shift making her shiver.

"Ha!"